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ABSTRACT

Orientation materials for prospective teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries contains information about factors affecting EFL teaching in the classroom. Topics discussed include religion, family, politics, education, English-Arabic language differences, teaching approaches, and the teacher as a representative of his or her own culture. Information is also given for finding a job, including a list of schools and organizations offering EFL courses in Saudi Arabia, and some employment services. Specific suggestions for job interviews and information on books, materials, and resources currently available to teachers in Saudi Arabia are also presented. A bibliography of relevant and useful articles, books, and guides is appended. (MSE)

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GUIDELINES FOR PROSPECTIVE EFL TEACHERS
IN SAUDI ARABIA ©

Constance Boerner Joy

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Master of Arts in Teaching degree at the School for
International Training, Brattleboro, Vermont

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ABSTRACT

This paper is intended to be an orientation pamphlet for prospective EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. It may be useful for teachers in other Middle Eastern countries as well, particularly in the Arab Gulf states. It contains a statement on factors affecting EFL teaching in the classroom, based on the author's five and a half years of experience in Riyadh. It touches on such topics as religion, family, politics, education, English-Arabic Language differences, teaching approaches and the teacher as a representative of his own culture. It also has suggestions for finding a job, including a list of schools and organizations offering EFL courses in Saudi Arabia and some job search services. It gives specific suggestions for job interviews, and details regarding books, materials and resources currently available in the Kingdom for ESL teachers. Attached to the paper is an appendix of useful articles, books and guides for an EFL teacher in Arabia.

ERIC Descriptors: Teaching English Saudi Arabia
Middle East

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Introduction

I have been an EFL teacher at a women's school in Saudi Arabia for the past five and a half years, from 1980 through 1985. I arrived here with no knowledge whatsoever of the Saudi educational system and only vague notions regarding Saudi customs, geography, politics, social attitudes, etc. When I recall my naivete, I am appalled, but not surprised. Hundreds of other English teachers have arrived in the Kingdom under the same circumstances. There is simply very little literature available on the subject and there was even less in 1980.

At present, there are approximately 2000-3000 EFL teachers working in Saudi Arabia, either within the educational system or with private corporations and businesses¹. The intent of this article is to focus on a series of issues affecting any teacher in Arabia and, hopefully, to aid in reducing misunderstandings and misperceptions which often occur between foreign teachers coming here and their Saudi hosts.

Moving to a new country involves a lot of adjustment no matter where it is, but this adjustment need not be compounded by a sense of fear. For the foreign teacher in Arabia, experiencing culture shock, working within a

strange educational system, understanding the values Saudis place on education, or understanding the role played by Wahabi Islam, politics, cultural and tribal values can all be best approached with a sense of curiosity and with a willingness to comprehend reasons behind the observed differences in behavior. A positive attitude and a desire to become informed through talking to Saudis and through reading, will improve the effectiveness of any EFL teacher.

When I first told my family and friends I was moving to Saudi Arabia, the response was mainly one of horror and dread. My family begged me to reconsider and expressed genuine concern for what it might mean for me as a woman to go into a conservative religious society where, according to Western perceptions, women are unwillingly veiled and hidden. My friends simply thought I was crazy. There was a whole world to choose from, why Saudi Arabia? Five and a half years later it is interesting for me to realize how grossly distorted most of my family's and friends' ideas were -- as well as those propagated by the media.

The Western press generally stereotypes Saudi men as obnoxious oil barons with a curious schizophrenic personality: on the one hand throwing money around at

casinos abroad, on the other hand engaged in solemn religious behavior and reflection at home and refraining from alcohol. Saudi women are described as oppressed, shy, unapproachable and xenophobic. The government is often viewed as a feudal authoritarian monarchy with strict controls over its people and rumored to be on the verge of revolution. The Western press image of Saudis and their government, generally speaking, is very superficial and often totally inaccurate.

Nevertheless, I am sure these images had a negative impact on my behavior for the first year or so that I was in the Kingdom. It was a long process to get over my initial apprehensions and to begin to readjust my misperceptions as a result of interactions I had with Saudis and others, both at work and within the community.

I remember beginning my teaching job with an overwhelming sense that I must watch my step, that the power of government or royal family might do me out of a job, that I might inexorably offend my students if I overstepped social or religious taboos in the classroom. By now I have found that there are many kinds of Saudis, some educated and some not, some friendly, some overbearing, etc. Most Saudis are simply kind, generous, warm, helpful and curious about the West. As a teacher I

have felt a sense of respect and have received a welcome from my students that I have never experienced in America. Women and men are equally excited to see their country grow and strongly feel the need for education and international contact. Students are curious, inquisitive, open and friendly and greatly enjoy the opportunity to discuss their views and way of life with an American.

Teaching opportunities and experiences differ enormously in Saudi Arabia. My intent in writing this paper is not to detail differences and similarities between possible teaching situations, but rather to present a set of what I consider to be important factors that any teacher who is, or will be, teaching in Saudi Arabia should be aware of, and should consider and reflect upon. My own experience is limited to one institution, the Al Nahda Women's Philanthropic Society in Riyadh. However, I have had contact over the last five years with a great number of EFL teachers in many other educational settings. Issues to be discussed include topics of relevance for any EFL situation, topics that may possibly extend to other work situations as well. While the examples I present are mostly based on personal experiences at Al Nahda, they also reflect the experiences of other EFL teachers and thus can be generalized.

The Al Nahda Women's Philanthropic Society was founded in 1962 by Princess Sarah, the daughter of King Faisal. It was first established as an institute where ladies could help with issues of charity, and indeed largely remains so, but it was also established to provide a setting where Saudi women could get out of the house, contribute to their society and improve themselves through the study of French, English, sewing, typing, etc. The English program at Al Nahda currently has an enrollment of about 400 students who range from about age 16 through 50. They are mostly housewives with a sprinkling of high school and university students, as well as some working women. Generally, they are motivated to learn, as most are businessmen's wives who have an opportunity to speak English when they travel and who speak English to servants and shopkeepers from Third World countries in Saudi Arabia. Many want to help their children in their school studies.

In many ways the situation at the Al Nahda Society reflects English language teaching anywhere in the Kingdom. In other ways it is atypical. It is under the direction of the Presidency for Girls Education while at the same time it has an independent administration reporting to a board of the society (generally royal

family and wives of influential businessmen). It also enjoys a connection with the British Council which at one time approved all EFL texts and stamped diplomas. This relationship now mostly means that wives of Council employees are often hired to teach, and students are encouraged to take British Royal Society of Arts and Cambridge exams for which classes are offered at Al Nahda. On a day-to-day basis decisions are made through a Saudi-Palestinian staff working in conjunction with the EFL teachers group and their coordinator. This international staffing and the multiple sources of input into the EFL program is common throughout the Kingdom with the additional typical element that one or two people ultimately make the final decisions. Frustrations and objections to committee inputs are characteristically vented by going to the top.

Al Nahda is by no means the most modern and up-to-date EFL facility in the Kingdom. Nor is it the worst. It is probably average. It is housed in a 20-year old building surrounded by high walls so that women may unveil in the courtyards without fear of being seen. It has blackboards, a language lab, and a small teachers' resource room. There is a staff of fifteen EFL teachers.

Section I: The Classroom

Cultural Factors Affecting EFL Teaching

A. Religion

On the whole, Saudis are a deeply religious people with strong beliefs in God and in the words of His Follower, the Prophet Mohammed. A conservative religion, Wahabi Islam, dominates all aspects of life in Saudi Arabia from government and economy to shop hours and minute aspects of daily behavior. Its influence is strongly felt by anyone teaching here and it is highly recommended that anyone coming here inform himself on Islam and the fundamentalist Wahabi movement in Arabia. He should also read the Koran and learn about the five pillars of Islam and the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Any such reading done will certainly enrich the EFL teacher's understanding of the culture and enhance his relationships with Saudis.

In the United States, both by law and custom, an effort is made to minimize the influence of religion in the classroom. All religions are regarded as having equal status in the educational system and freedom of religion is a right. Although such practices as Easter and Christmas programs in the schools are often deemed offensive by Jews and Hanukkah programs are criticized by Christians, on the whole the impact of religion is felt

only through such celebrations and does not extend to religious moral judgements of right behavior in the classroom, textbook censorship, or selection of teaching material. In Saudi Arabia nearly the opposite situation exists. Here the culture values highly its fundamentalist interpretation of Islam, both by law and custom. The government and the schools see their primary role as one of instilling proper religious behavior and knowledge. They believe that Arabic is the language of God because it was used to reveal His Holy Word in the Koran. Mecca is regarded as the place chosen by God for Muslim Pilgrimage and is off-limits to non-Muslims. The official governmental and religious policy is that both the language and the land must be kept pure so as to be an inspiration for all Muslims.

In myriad ways these differences, in values placed on religion, its role in education, and the belief that Islam is the only true religion, are in opposition to American beliefs in religious tolerance, religious freedom and the separation of church and state. Clearly this has an impact on teaching in the EFL classroom. It should be stressed strongly that religion is totally intertwined with education in Saudi Arabia and that clinging to Western perceptions as to the role of religion in the

classroom decreases a teacher's effectiveness. In the following discussion, the major effects of Saudi religious values are clarified.

First, education is sexually segregated after age nine or ten. According to the tenants of conservative Islam, women should not socialize with men other than family members, either in the home or in public places, including schools. In fact, education for girls and women began in the Kingdom only twenty years ago and is under the direction of the Presidency for Girls Education which is always headed by a well-known religious leader. The chief effect of this segregation, in practice, has been that EFL teachers generally cater to students' wishes to learn mainly a vocabulary oriented to the cultural or work interests of a specific sex. In the case of women, a vocabulary focusing on content areas such as recipes, sewing, clothing, etc. is often taught and many notional functional dialogs in the standard texts are generally skipped because they are basically boring to women and irrelevant to their lives. This is particularly true of dialogs such as filling out checks, passport forms, checking into hotels and airports, etc. which are perceived as the purview of the male. While such an approach to teaching would seem to limit women's

acquisition of English, this is not entirely so. In a country where women see men as superior and dominant, having only women in a classroom leaves them free to talk without worrying about whether it is proper to express themselves in front of men, whether they are behaving modestly, etc. This fact can be used to real advantage when organizing group work, role play or any interactive activities. Many of my colleagues in England and the U.S. have told me that Arab women are shy. I find the opposite to be true and attribute the differences in our experiences to sexual segregation here as opposed to integration abroad. On the opposite side of the coin, what sexual segregation means for many male teachers is that classes are hardly ever general English but more commonly English for special purposes and often specific task and job related. Both male and female teachers face the problem of having students act out the part of the opposite sex in any role playing situations.

Secondly, textbooks are censored by the Ministry of Education. Working in this very conservative religious environment, one becomes extremely aware of how much material in Western EFL textbooks is oriented toward having fun for the college-aged Westerner, the target EFL student. A vast amount of grammar is taught in the

context of dating, dancing, and boy meets girl. Here, where most marriages are arranged, where alcohol is forbidden and where dress is conservative, religious authorities decree that all material, visual, written or auditory of a sexual or otherwise immoral nature must be stricken from use. Teachers are asked to go through their materials with black magic markers and cover bare midriffs, cleavages, churches, crosses and religious pictures as well as words like beer and wine, lessons on Christmas, etc. Perhaps the most startling aspect of this censorship to Westerners is that some very religious Wahabis believe that music is immoral, so that any listening material containing music may be condemned by individual students.

The chief effect this censorship has in the classroom, of course, is that it limits the number of materials one can use. Most teachers however, find that a lot of these materials are rather silly for married adults anyway and using them can only show poor taste and cultural insensitivity on the part of an EFL teacher. The bar humor which may be amusing to Westerners is lost on most Saudi students particularly females, naive to the innuendos of the dating world. In general, teachers do not really feel too restricted by the censorship, but

instead are spurred on to find other materials or to create their own which are more oriented towards the interests and conservative morals of the students.

For teachers in Saudi primary and secondary schools, the job of editing EFL texts will already have been done by the Ministry of Education. MacMillan Company has just sold an EFL series to Saudi Arabia with separate versions for boys and girls at the secondary levels.² The boys' version is said to be more academically oriented based on the notion that boys are more likely to continue on to university. EFL teachers in other settings generally do not have as strict a surveillance on their texts and materials, but officially all texts are open for government inspection and censorship.

Another aspect of Islam which affects teaching is that Koranic injunctions regarding daily behavior permeate the culture to a far greater degree than is seen in the West where it would be difficult to peg specific daily acts as Christian, Jewish or as stemming from any religion. Teachers must become far more aware of the religious reasons for various behaviors of students which in the U.S. would not be seen as having a religious origin -- such things as dress, eating habits and language. For instance, the Koran states that women should cover their

hair and "parts which should not be seen." In practice this means that female teachers and students alike are required to wear floor-length, long sleeved dresses and scarves, and that students must veil outside the classroom. Prayer should occur five times a day and at set times. Therefore, classes must break at these times and any teacher must make sure that all students go to the school prayer room. The list of behaviors could go on and on, but one last example of particular interest to a language teacher is that the Koran states one should not use the word will, indicating future mood, without following it with the words if it be the will of God (Inshallah), a phrase which can also be interpreted as "hopefully." Therefore, one continually finds oneself in situations like this: The teacher says "Will you do page 10 for homework?" and the answer is "God willing." Any statement of definite promise would be considered presumptuous since only God controls or knows the future. The expression further implies a different sense of importance that is frequently imparted to menial tasks and offers an excuse if the task is not done. The degree to which religious phrases permeate the language in greetings, apologies, thanks, and a multitude of expressions indicates the deep religious belief present

in the culture and constantly startles the EFL teacher.

One final aspect of Islam which carries over into the EFL classroom is the fact that, in Saudi Arabia at least, Islam is regarded as an aspect of all subject materials taught. A large part of classroom time is spent on demonstrating connections between science and religion, literature and religion, etc. Indeed, history as a school subject is the history of Islam and its spread. What surprises many teachers is how this high interest in religion on the part of individual Saudis carries over into the classroom totally unsolicited. In feedback sessions, when asked what they would like to learn to talk about in English, students often demand to be taught a religious vocabulary so that they can explain prayer, pilgrimage, Ramadan fasting, etc. to foreigners. Students frequently try to convert teachers and give them copies of the Koran. The feeling seems to be that as good Muslims, it is their duty to be educated about Islam, even in a foreign tongue, and to educate any foreigners as well. Any EFL teacher who thinks that this zeal regarding religion would extend to learning about Christianity is likely to find the students disinterested and, additionally, he could find himself out of a job for discussing other religions in the classroom. Both

officially and at a personal level, there is an intolerance towards non-Muslim beliefs. Churches, temples, etc. are forbidden and the holy books of all other religions are banned in the Kingdom.

In summary, Islam in Saudi Arabia can be said to dominate all aspects of life and its influence is certainly felt strongly by anyone teaching here. Like other religious states before it, Saudi Arabia basically wants to protect its people from the onslaught of immoral outside customs and to instill in its people a deep and strong sense of religion as viewed from the Wahabi perspective of its leaders.

The EFL teacher must be constantly aware that he is in a conservative country and take care to respect that fact. On the other hand, he need not necessarily feel as though the wrath of the matawa, or religious police, will come down on him every time he commits an offensive act or expresses an opinion contrary to local religious viewpoints. In the classroom the best approach is simply to avoid open discussion of religion if possible and to make it clear that the teacher's role is to help with English only.

B. Family and Tribe

Throughout the Middle East, but especially in Saudi Arabia, family and tribe are a person's primary source of attachment and social interaction. Privilege, power, jobs, medical aid, marriage arrangements, help when a crime has been committed, are all acquired through family and only rarely through friends. In Arabia, there is the additional fact that one family, the Al Sauds, have in essence created a family-run government with the most important posts -- those of King, Ministers and Governors -- all being held or controlled by the 50 sons and 4000 or so grandsons and great grandsons of King Abd Al Aziz Ibn Saud who founded the Kingdom in the 1920s. Much of daily business is run on the basis of having a connection with, or way of getting to, someone in power. The names of persons who have social, political and business power are on the lips of everyone and soon learned by foreigners here. Getting something done, even for a teacher, may mean knowing someone, or being able to use a name effectively. The fact that this is a society where family is important and the power and privilege of the Royal family and some great business families are accepted and respected, carries over into the classroom in various ways.

First, it is important that the EFL teacher know each student by first name, and that he also learn family names, their possible political or social implications, and how to pronounce them as well as possible. Often teachers look at unpronounceable Arabic names and almost deliberately block themselves from saying them correctly. One teacher consistently called a student Hanan Al "K" for two years because she refused to learn to pronounce her name. Needless to say, such behavior is not appreciated. By learning names, villages, social and religious backgrounds of student, one can demonstrate an interest in the students' world. This more than pays off in the wealth of information that students give to the teacher, information which can be turned around and used in the classroom for effective language practice.

It is also important for a teacher to be aware that family and privilege may affect both the teaching approach and grading. Occasionally, princes and persons of high status complain to administrators with the result that a teacher is fired unfairly, a small class doomed to be shut is kept open, an air conditioner is repaired, a class is cancelled or extended. The instant effect of a powerful complaint may shock a Westerner (especially if the teacher has been trying to get the same air conditioner repaired

for a long time), but the results seem to be both positive and negative. Power and influence are used to a much greater degree than in educational settings in the West but often in a way that encourages administrative efficiency and not usually in an unjust manner to victimize teachers. Grades are rarely changed at Al Nahda due to student privilege, but several teachers at universities and schools where grades count towards future entrance to jobs or schools have commented that powerful parental complaints often result in changing a B to an A etc. In most teachers' experience, it seems important to know who Saudi royalty are and to treat royalty kindly and with the same sense of fairness and equality that one should give all students. Instructors usually find that what royalty want is what everyone else wants -- to be taught English in a clearly structured manner by someone who likes his job and is interested in his students.

Another familial and tribal effect in the classroom is that of historical enmity and prejudice. Occasionally teachers find, to their surprise, that some students will not talk to each other or may even despise each other --only to find out that they come from what in the not too distant past were warring tribes. In some cases, students will have already been segregated by tribal background.

The Saudi Arabian Air Force, for instance, deliberately avoids putting formerly warring tribes in the same unit and the National Guard is carefully selected for the same reasons. Furthermore, a teacher may find that people from Jeddah may dislike people from Riyadh, from Abha, etc., revealing attitudes much like our North-South prejudices. If one has students from different nationalities and religions, one may sometimes find the classroom flaring up with Middle East problems. During the last few years, many teachers have seen problems like this among Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian students particularly as the situation in Lebanon has deteriorated. The solution is to be sensitive to hostilities resulting from family background, to try and head off embarrassing questions by learning students backgrounds, and not to insist upon group or pairwork by students who are absolutely adamant in their dislike for one another. In general, family and religious background problems of this kind rarely reach the level where they are disruptive of class progress, if the teacher is sensitive.

A final area for consideration regarding the effect of family in the EFL classroom is the fact that among Saudis, many families are extended, with multiple wives, mothers and many children. Drawing a family tree can be a

real experience for the uninitiated teacher. It is wise to be aware of the fact that some students may have as many as 20 or 50 siblings and that up to four wives, while not common, is a form of polygamy accepted and supported in Islam. It is impolite to ask Saudi men about their wives and Saudi women about their husbands' jobs. However, it is considered customary to ask about family's and children's health as part of a greeting. People will volunteer information about their families if they want a teacher to know, but teachers should not push for information as it may prove embarrassing to the students concerned.

In conclusion, the EFL teacher is likely to become aware early on in his experience in the Kingdom of the importance of tribe and family. He will very likely find that his students will not want to know or visit each other outside the classroom unless there is some family or business connection. However, in most teachers' experience, students will generally come to their teacher's house for a class party, although women will most likely be married and will want assurances that the party will be segregated. A teacher may find that being too friendly with some students precludes friendship with others, so he is wise to be equally kind to all, if

possible. On the other hand, much of the enjoyment of teaching in the Kingdom involves learning the cultural and tribal differences of students and it would be insane to avoid visiting Saudis at home or avoid accepting invitations to weddings, etc. A good policy is simply to display an open curiosity to Saudi family and tribal history and custom and enjoy students for what they can impart of their rich and unusual family and cultural backgrounds.

C. Politics

Politics at the government level affect EFL teaching in three major ways: textbook selection and censorship, staffing, and school year scheduling. The first area I have already discussed under religion.

As regards staffing, the trend now is to allow only Muslims to teach in Saudi primary and secondary schools and this may well continue upwards. The repercussions of this decision are that in the future students are unlikely to be taught by native speakers. For Americans and British citizens looking for a job here, unless they are Muslims, this will limit options.

School year scheduling is generally done by the Ministry of Education and may not be decided until close to the time classes start. Dates for the winter break or end of school term are never announced until a month or so beforehand. The date for the beginning of the school year is usually announced shortly before the summer break.

Saudi politics may also affect teachers when minor changes in the law are made, such as rules governing visas, entrance and exit from the Kingdom etc. American and British citizens may contact their embassies here for a list of major differences in the law that foreigners should be aware of for daily living and conduct.

D. Education

Education in Saudi Arabia has taken phenomenal strides since oil was discovered in 1938 and virtually 95% of the population was illiterate. There are no currently accurate statistics, but studies made in 1979 indicated a 26% illiteracy rate for men and a 68% rate for women.³ As the years pass, illiteracy is becoming more and more confined to an older population. Hundreds of schools have opened in the Kingdom and, while school is not compulsory at any level, in the larger cities and towns there is social pressure to send children to school. In 1983, there were 1.7 million students attending schools in the Kingdom and in 1985 around 70,000 males and 21,000 females matriculated at the university level.⁴ English is a required part of the curriculum beginning in the equivalent of fourth grade (the last two years of a six year primary school program), so that when students graduate from secondary school they have completed six years of English training. English is also a mandatory component of all university studies programs. It is quite common now to meet Saudis with BAs, MAs and PhDs from American and European universities who have a fluid command of English.

From an official point of view, both education and

English instruction are highly valued and seen as necessary to put Saudi Arabia into the international world of the twentieth century. From the students and teachers perspectives, it is more difficult to say. Becoming educated often conflicts with traditional social values and modes of behavior and work, especially for women. The schools have a terribly difficult job of teaching study and organizational habits without a strong support system at home. Students bring home assignments to organize, memorize and research, and their parents are not only unable to help them, but push them into continuing traditional social roles which do not emphasize education and which allow them no time for study. In my experience I have had to slow down my English teaching considerably, and spend a lot of time teaching skills such as note-taking, note book organization, how to study, etc. -- in essence, in helping students to learn how to learn. I have also had to recognize the high value placed on family interaction and visiting in the evening and limit homework to a reasonable amount, given my students' home environments.

The value placed on English learning specifically seems to vary greatly with individual student's perceived needs. After six years of training, many secondary pupils

can hardly utter a word or write a correct sentence. University students and adults in special training programs where English is spoken or where job advancement is based on English qualifications, do better. There is currently some official discussion of the choice of English as a second language in the schools and the necessity of making it mandatory, but not much. Its importance seems to be widely accepted.

Probably the greatest problems faced here by EFL teachers vis a vis the general issue of education are those relating to literacy itself. Because many of the positions here involve EFL tuition to adults (especially in government training positions), instructors often find they are teaching a second language to persons who are non-literate, or who have low levels of literacy in their first language. Guidance in basic skills, such as how to hold a pencil, paper, join letters, move eyes and pen from left to right (rather than right to left as in Arabic), is often necessary, as well as letter shape recognition and matching. Many pre-reading skills have to be taught long before any actual written work on a word or sentence level can begin. Teachers may have to introduce new values regarding the utility and importance of being able to read and show students how they can make use of signs,

posters, directions, course texts and training manuals in their daily lives. Furthermore, whether instructing literates or non-literates, any teacher here constantly has to remind himself that most students come from homes where reading among adults is not the norm and reading habits are not reinforced. Only 30 years ago the Koran may have been the only book read by the few literate and highly revered men.

The effect that past low levels of literacy has had for Saudi students learning English at intermediate and advanced levels is only too apparent when students take international tests. According to a recent report, of a total of 473,944 students from 143 different countries taking the TOEFL exam from 1978 through 1980, the 6000 Saudis ranked fifth from the bottom in terms of mean scores. As a group they scored 441. Their worst performance was in reading, their mean reading score being 41, third from the bottom. It is interesting that eight of the 16 lowest scoring countries were developing Arab nations (Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Libya, Kuwait, Bahrain, Jordan, Yemen), the rest being primarily African and Asian (Laos) and Pacific Islands. A keen reader of these statistics would note that all of these countries have alphabets different from those of English

and all have low adult native literacy levels. That students were able to reach even such low scores without adult support is a major achievement.

Another substantial problem often discussed in literature on education in the Arab world is that of cheating.⁶ Nearly every English teacher in the Kingdom, whether at the university, in secondary schools or at private institutes has experienced this problem, involving the majority of his students. In class, students "help" each other on quizzes and tests and do not seem to display guilt (they are more likely to be amused) when caught. The ethic to help those in need and stay with their group seems to override educational norms of honesty for the majority. Homework assignments are so often done by relatives (or even a privately hired EFL teacher) that many teachers simply do not give them. For most students, self-directed learning and responsibility for mastery is not as important as show, and getting it right for the teacher. In every institute which requires testing this problem is of acute concern to administrators. Most hire proctors (invigilators) in extra ranks when finals come around. During the school term, teachers try to minimize cheating by individualizing work assignments as much as possible.

Another area of concern for EFL teachers is sometimes that of squabbles due to international staffing. At Al Nahda where the teaching staff is about a third British, a third American and a third teachers of different Arab nationalities, arguments sometimes flare over choices of texts, which kind of English should be taught, how course levels should be arranged, which methods should be used, etc. The RSA approach, the International House, and a variety of American and Arab teaching perspectives are claimed as the best by teachers from different educational backgrounds and students often get bounced from one method to another as they progress through the levels. When issues arise over transportation, supplies, rooms, student registration, etc. and the Saudi administration is drawn in, intercultural communication becomes even more complex. Surprisingly, things rarely break down completely, but resolutions are commonly ad hoc and leave many Arabs and non-Arabs alike confused and uncomfortable.

E. Arabic-English Language Contrasts

One of the most basic issues affecting the EFL teacher is simply the fact that Arabic is a language quite distinct from English in terms of both the phonetic and writing systems. Quite fortunately for the EFL teacher, there are now many articles available citing specific⁷ teaching problems based on these differences.

The most fundamental distinction between the two languages is the phenomenon referred to as diglossia. This is the fact that in every Arab country there exist two languages, a colloquial spoken dialect and classical Arabic, the common written language all Arabs share. This written language is quite different from spoken dialects in vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar. In essence, for many Arabs, their own written language is a foreign language. The EFL teacher is likely to notice English learning problems stemming sometimes from rules governing written classical Arabic and at other times from colloquial interference.

Arabic has more consonants than English, both in the spoken and the written language. Except for the English "r" sound, in any position which is quite different from the rolled Arabic "r" and the "p" sound which does not exist in Arabic, most Arabs have few problems with English

consonants. There are some dialectical differences among Arabs, so that for instance Syrians and Egyptians may pronounce "ث" as "S" and "ذ" as "z" etc., but most Saudis have few problems with consonantal pronunciation and also usually learn the English letters to represent these sounds quite quickly.

The case is quite different with vowels. The number of vowel sounds and stress upon them varies quite extensively in Arabic dialects and differences may not really be noted by the average speaker. Written Arabic has only three vowel letters, "ا" which is a long "A", "و" which is a long "O" and "ي" which is a long "I". It also has three diacritical marks which serve as vowels --kasra (short i), damma (short u), and fatha (short a) --but which are removed for most writing. Because short vowels and diphthongs are not written, a student who has learned English letters might write his name "Mhmd," as in Arabic and pronounce it "Mohammed." The foreign teacher used to seeing spoken vowels written wonders why he makes these mistakes. Even worse, words with vowel distinctions that are non-existent in Arabic, and complex or multiple English spelling for the same spoken sound become terribly difficult for students to master and instructors to teach. "Puncture" becomes "bntr" ; "their," "there" and

"they're" all become "thr," etc. Even for students literate in Arabic, the degree of attention that must be paid to vowel insertion in English writing, over and above mastering new vowel pronunciations or distinctions which are blurred in Arabic, are quite burdensome.

Two other orthographic differences that commonly confuse students are that written Arabic has no capital letters, and that some words like "the" and "and" become attached to the following word in Arabic. It takes beginning students quite a long time to write letters of different height as well as shape for the same sound and also to master a correct spacing between words.

F. Teaching Approaches

Traditionally, education in the Arab world is very structured, with the teacher in an authoritarian and disciplinarian role, and students learning largely through rote memorization. To a large degree, this is still the case in Saudi Arabia, and English teachers trained in other methods often feel the impact of tradition and resistance when they try out new ways. In my own experience and those of other teachers at Al Nahda, persistence with new methods has paid off in terms of learning and has been enthusiastically received over time. I have tried pairwork and group work with games, problem solving tasks, grammar and spelling puzzles, etc. with great success. I have also used a number of role playing activities, have had cooking and cultural activity demonstrations and have had students plan their own class curriculum. Many of my colleagues here are making use of censored video tapes, films and computers. The only thing one must be really careful about is screening material so that it is not culturally or religiously offensive -- and of course one must work within the confines of what is acceptable at the particular job situation, that is to the administration, one's boss, other colleagues, etc. In general, students seem to be

more teacher-dependent than in the United States, so that in trying out new methods which call for self-reliance and risk-taking in uncustomary ways, it is necessary to coddle students somewhat until the methods become clear and familiar to them.

At Al Nahda and at most institutions in Saudi Arabia, there is no single or common methodological approach to teaching unless perhaps at the military institutes which generally use the Audio Lingual approach. International staffing and last minute on-site hiring preclude the possibility of having a single methodology at a specific institute and usually individual teachers simply fall back on whatever training they have had, if any. Most teachers from England have done two to nine months Royal Society of Arts (RSA) certificate training which emphasizes a grammar-based approach to teaching within notional-functional settings for conversation and vocabulary building and in fact, most English texts reflect this approach. Some have had International House training and use a more student-centered approach to teaching than is common with RSA and frequently use some Silent Way techniques. Americans tend mostly to have university training in teaching English to Americans, but those with Master's level ESL background may have been sensitized to

approaches such as Curran's Community Language Learning, Gattegno's Silent Way, Lozanov's Suggestopedia as well as the more traditional Audio Lingual method and grammar-translation approaches -- and other methods as well.

My own ESL education was at the School for International Training in Brattleboro Vermont, where I was introduced to several teaching methodologies, some aspects of which colleagues of mine and I have been able to put into practice with greater or lesser success in the Saudi environment.

The Silent Way. At Al Nahda, bilingual Arab teachers of differing nationalities teach all beginner classes, so I have never seen Gattegno's approach used at a pre-literate level. However, other teachers and I have used aspects of this approach with positive results at lower and intermediate levels. Gattegno's ideas regarding teacher silence, peer correction before teacher correction, the color sound charts, the use of cuisinaire rods and finger motions have been used with success. As stated earlier in this paper, Saudis are used to a lecture style approach and in my experience, it has been best to ease them into greater and greater periods of teacher silence as the school year proceeds. Likewise, some of them are insulted at first when corrected by anyone except

a teacher, but I have found that once a sense of group forms this no longer remains a problem. The excitement of being able to give the correct answer generally brings students around to the point where they see that they themselves are working, using language and doing more learning than if the teacher alone corrects.

I have personally found Gattegno's idea of using colors for sounds, especially vowel sounds, to be very useful at low levels among Arab students. However, I have not been able to successfully use Gattegno's entire color-sound and fidel charts. As discussed earlier, Arabic has only three letters representing vowel sounds and many words can be written entirely without vowel letters. Typically beginning EFL students transliterate Arabic spelling into English. I have found that the visual impact of seeing bright colors to represent vowels serves as a strong reminder not to drop the vowel letter in spelling, as well as to differentiate between the many vowel sounds in English in contrast to Arabic and to teach basic two letter combinations for single vowel sounds.

Community Language Learning. Although I am an eclectic teacher, after my training at SIT, I would basically categorize myself as using the CLL approach to EFL. I have tried to use CLL techniques recently in

Arabia whenever not too restricted by required texts, British Council tests, administrative syllabi, etc. Because most of the students I teach have little education and almost no contact with native speakers, I set as my first classroom priority the creation of an environment of security, from which each student decides on his own whether or not to experiment with risk-taking in language use. I make use of Curran's notions of SARD (security, attention, reflection, discrimination) and his five stages of cognitive-affective learning. I have seen students become more and more motivated to learn as they receive "counseling-responses" and are able to create "their own" English classes.

Many teachers at Al Nahda who teach conversation classes or middle-level reading, writing, listening and speaking classes, like to use a text in combination with CLL type student-generated programs regarding functional English. For instance, students might ask to learn about house decor in a given week, so the teacher takes advantage of this request to teach prepositions of place, work on the passive voice, or other grammar structures embedded in typical conversations and appropriate to the level of the students. Over the year, the syllabi taught at a given level turn out to be pretty much the same,

despite the fact that grammar and topics are taught in a different order.

As mentioned before, Arabs in general, tend to be very teacher dependent. They like to do what they perceive the teacher wants and they enjoy rote memorization. To a degree, CLL allows them the security of what they already know by permitting them to memorize dialogs if they wish and creating an atmosphere of empathy, but it also gradually moves students towards greater and greater independence from the teacher towards self-initialization of language learning and use. I have found it to be a useful and not too shocking approach in an Arab environment which is just beginning to allow change from very traditional methods.

Audio Lingual Method. A number of teachers at Al Nahda have been trained in the Audio Lingual approach and almost all of us have learned another language either through this method or through drill-work in combination with grammar translation techniques. This and the fact that at levels two and three in the Society, the American Robert Lado series of English texts are used, mean that the ALM and variations thereof have been tried over a number of years. I do not like the method myself and I think my unwillingness to carry through with a thorough

program in the four skill areas using ALM techniques was partially responsible for my lack of success when I taught using the Lado texts. However, I have known several teachers who use the Lado texts in conjunction with ALM techniques quite successfully. This has been especially true if they were able to capitalize on several students love of rote memorization and traditional learning techniques and have it spread throughout the classroom.

Al Nahda is a very flexible institute in allowing its teachers freedom to try different teaching approaches in the classroom. This is particularly so in classes which are not focussed toward British Council offered exams. However, it is probably unlikely that a prospective teacher will have so much freedom in most job situations in the Kingdom. He will more than likely have pre-set syllabi and texts and often be told that ALM or grammar translation is the expected approach.

G. The Cultural Background of the Teacher

Any foreigner teaching here will certainly soon become aware that not only is he operating on the basis of stereotypes of the Arab and Saudi world, but his students are viewing him with preconceived stereotypical notions as well. He quickly realizes he is a representative of his culture and indeed may be the only real, live American, Englishman, etc. some of his students have ever met. Some students may flatter, accuse, love or hate a teacher because of nationality alone.

Ways of judging people, conducting conversations and business, defining time and space, body language, as well as general values regarding religion, family and Middle East politics all are quite different on average between Americans, British citizens and Saudis. Ethnocentrism and unwillingness to listen carefully are often great barriers to effective teaching and interaction in the Kingdom. In order to interact and communicate effectively, a teacher must be sensitive to the relativity of attitudes and behavior and try to understand Saudis within their own unique context. He should try to see himself as a Saudi would see him. He should understand why the Saudi point of view makes sense on its own, not simply that it is different from the American or British one.

In general, fortunately, Saudis have rather positive attitudes towards Americans and most Westerners. The teacher feels the effect of this in the classroom in terms of a sense of respect. Possibly due to the long term presence of Aramco in the Kingdom, the frequent hiring of Americans for top level management positions, and the tendency to send young men to the U.S. and England for university studies, Saudis regard Americans and the British as hard workers who tend to "get the job done." They may not necessarily like their directness and bluntness, which are perceived as rude, but they do admire their knowledge, skills and education. Saudis know Westerners like to complete work on schedule and often approach them when they are in a fix or want work done quickly. However, they also believe that time is a function of what God and nature decree and that having a cup of tea with someone is, in fact, part of getting down to business, in the sense of getting to know a person. If an American is unwilling to take the time to have tea and get to know a person, he has a problem, not the Saudi.

Another plus in Americans' favor is the generally democratic attitude and casual behavior demonstrated in everyday interaction. At a tribal level, Saudi political decision making takes place at the majlis, a forum for

all males. In theory at least, the King will listen to any man who wishes to approach him. Saudis believe in equal rights and equal status for all men before the law. The Koran and religious belief reinforce this attitude by emphasizing that all men are equal in the sight of God. Saudis are casual in their dress generally and tend to touch and get close to the person they are talking with so as to maintain a strong sense of interaction, both physically and mentally. Americans and British citizens who are flexible towards being touched and who are quite casual and outgoing, tend to adjust better than those who are not. The general stereotyped perception that Saudis have is one that we ourselves have: Americans are friendly and casual, the English are "stand-offish."

As stated earlier, Saudis place a strong value on religious and moral behaviors associated with Islam and on family. It is in these two areas that the greatest cultural barriers and misperceptions probably exist between them and Westerners. Some religious attitudes which the teacher should understand were discussed earlier. But it is also important that he know that, while on the whole Saudis stereotype all Westerners as immoral, they may not think this is the case on an individual level. Foreign films and newspaper articles

often give the picture that Americans are all Atheists whereas in fact 75-95% believe in God, according to different studies,⁸ and that the American family is falling apart, when in fact only about 20% of marriages ever end in divorce.⁹ Saudi attitudes towards Americans are the result of a combination of personal contact and media acquired knowledge and may not be any more consistent than our attitudes towards them.

In a society which judges its own members chiefly on whether or not they are "good," according to Islamic-Wahabi standards of morality, or come from a family of "good" reputation, it is difficult for Saudis to judge Westerners in any other way than through making use of stereotypes unless they get to know them personally. Yet often they are afraid of any contact with someone who might prove to be an immoral person. In contrast to Saudis, Americans and most native English speakers tend to judge people in terms of their achievements, education and job experience. When they ask people questions in these areas, Saudis wonder if their questions are relevant to any purposeful conversation and why there is such a lack of discussion on family and religion. Each culture simply accents different values.

Saudis, and Arabs in general, love their children and

families and spoil them enormously. This is a cultural bias they share with Americans and, in fact, when Arab and American families get together, they usually have a wonderful time enjoying their children, playing, eating and doing the same things American families would do at home -- although in more conservative families, the women may be separated from the men.

Middle East politics also play a major role in miscommunication between Americans and Arabs, although this is not so much the case with Saudis. The U.S.-Saudi political relationship is based chiefly on being military and economic allies while agreeing to dissent on the issue of Palestine. Individual Americans and Arabs in the Kingdom express a wide spectrum of political views regarding Palestine and this is getting to be more and more the case as wars flare in Iraq, Lebanon, Iran, etc. Arabs may generally view the U.S. as having an antagonistic political policy in the Middle East, but they realize political opinions of Westerners can be quite individual.

In summary, ethnocentrism and a lack of curiosity to get to know the culture or viewpoints of people living here are dangerous barriers to effective interaction both within and outside the classroom. Fear of unknown

consequences of misbehavior, with the result that a teacher simply hides himself from Saudis, of course only causes frustration, culture shock and unhappiness. Living with preconceived stereotypes the source of which may be either Arab or American, and coming to know their meaning and relativity, involves major adjustment in thinking patterns, but is certainly worth while in terms of increased understanding, awareness and communication.

Section II: EFL/ESL Jobs and Resources
in Saudi Arabia

A. Finding a Job

For ESL, EFL teachers seeking employment in Saudi Arabia, the most practical way to look for a job is to make use of job search organizations, if possible. In the United States, university campuses have such services available. Two particularly pertinent organizations of this type are:

TEFL/TESL Hotline
Former Volunteer Services
Washington, D.C. 20525
telephone: (800) 424-8580 x84 or 76

Placement Information Service of TESOL
202 D.C. Transit Bldg.
Georgetown University
Washington, D.C. 20057

The Hotline also publishes a weekly bulletin for ESL jobs.

In England, probably the best contact is:

The British Council
CILT (Centre for Information on Language
and Research)
20 Carlton House Terrace
London, SW1Y 5AP
telephone: 01 930 8466 x2782

Other practical approaches to job hunting are to look in ads in TESOL newsletters or the New York Times or to go to job conferences at ESL conventions. A more direct approach is to contact hiring agencies for firms in Saudi Arabia or companies, institutions and schools themselves.

If interested in working through a company, look for names in:

The Directory of American Firms in Saudi Arabia
Published by the American Embassy, Riyadh

Major Companies of the Arab World
Giselle Bricalt, ed., 1985
Graham and Trotman
Sterling House
66 Wilton Rd., London SW1V 1DE

A Guide to the Recruitment of British Nationals
in Saudi Arabia
Astral Recruitment Associates
Astral House
17/19 Maddox St., London W1R 0EY

Companies requiring EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia by and large have big government contracts. Positions open are largely for males, although there are some posts for females. Teaching situations are mostly to groups like the National Guard, Navy, Air Force, etc., or perhaps a hospital staff. There are few teacher training positions. Some of the major companies which hire ESL teachers presently are:

Raytheon Middle East Systems
c/o Saudi Arabian Program Office
350 Lowell St.
Andover, Mass. 01810
telephone: (617) 475-5000 x2916

Vinnell Corporation
Chief Recruiting Branch
One Flint Hill, Suite 100
10530 Rosehaven St.
Fairfax, Va. 22030
telephone: (703) 385-4515

Aramco
1100 Milam
Houston, Tx 77002
telephone: (713) 750-6000

Robert Ventre Associates, Inc.
10 Ferry Wharf
Newbury Port, Mass. 01950
telephone: (617) 462-2250

Lockheed Corp
2555 Nth Hollywood Way
Burbank, Calif. 91520

English Language Training
Northrup (117)
APO NY 09017
or
P.O. Box 21
Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

If interested in teaching English to university
students, male or female, one should contact:

University Teaching - Saudi Arabia
U.S. Recruiting Office
2425 West Loop South
Suite 540
Houston, Texas

If interested in teaching in a particular town,
specify this and the name of the university:

King Saud University (Riyadh)
King Faisal University (Al Hasa, Dammam)
King Abdul Aziz University (Jeddah)

Or, also on the university level, contact:

Director ELC
Institute of Public Administration
P.O. Box 205
Riyadh
(IPA also in Jeddah and Dammam)

The University of Petroleum and Minerals
Houston Dept (Dept 150)
5718 Westheimer, Suite 1550
Houston, Texas

If already in Kingdom, first contact the
American Embassy (USIS) Riyadh, telephone 464-0012, or the
British Council, Riyadh, telephone 402-1650, and ask to
speak to the English language officer who will most likely
have up-to-date phone numbers, addresses and, possibly,
job situations. Or write:

The Director of CELT
King Saud University
P.O. Box 2456
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Office of the Dean
College of Education
King Faisal University
P.O. Box 1759
Al Hasa, Saudi Arabia

English Language Center
University of Petroleum and Minerals
P.O. Box 1486
Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

King Abdul Aziz University
P.O. Box
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

If interested in teaching non-Saudi foreign children
(Korean, French, German, etc.), one should be able to do so
at an elementary level (through age fourteen) at English,
American or other foreign schools. These can be applied
to from abroad for higher financial benefits, or
locally. One can teach in the Saudi primary and secondary

system only if one is Muslim, although some exceptions are made at private schools. For Saudi and foreign schools, other than British and American, hiring is usually local only, and one should contact the appropriate embassies or schools. Addresses for the English and American schools in Kingdom are:

Saudi Arabian International School
(American Section)
P.O. Box 990
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
telephone: 491-5936

Saudi Arabian International School
(British Section)
P.O. Box 2907
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
telephone: 454-2748

Jeddah Prep School
c/o British Embassy
P.O. Box 393
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
telephone: 642-2124

Parents Cooperative School
P.O. Box 167
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (American)

Continental School
P.O. Box 6453
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
telephone: 669-0515 (pre-school, British)

The Dhahran Academy
c/o American Consulate General
Dhahran, Saudi Arabia
telephone: 864-3842

The British School
P.O. Box 269
Al Khobar, Saudi Arabia
telephone: 864-2005

ARAMCO Schools
P.O. Box 73
Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

Abqaiq School - ARAMCO
P.O. Box 515
Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

Taif American Cooperative School
Northrup Co.
Taif, Saudi Arabia

For a position teaching adult Saudi women, there are often openings at various women's welfare societies, but these are local hire only. Contact:

Al Nahda Women's Philanthropic Society
P.O. Box 7
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
telephone: 465-0029/464-9304

Al Wafaa Society
P.O. Box 8973
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
telephone: 465-1505

Al Faisaliya Society
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
telephone: 653-5000

Fatat Thaqaf Women's Welfare Society
P.O. Box 1277
Taif, Saudi Arabia
telephone: 732-1338

Al Waha al Liqat
Al Khobar
telephone: 864-0118

Other local hire positions involving teaching to non-Saudi men and women are sometimes available at:

The Continental Adult College of Education
P.O. Box
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
telephone: 669-0515

The Gulf Women's Association
P.O. Box
Al Khobar, Saudi Arabia
telephone: 864-2425

To teach private lessons, the best approach is to contact the local British Council, USIS, or the American Community Services which keep lists of teachers. Or contact the International Women's Clubs which advertise private lessons in newsletters.

B. Teaching Situations

The variety of teaching situations in Saudi Arabia is probably as great as those in the U.S. or the UK.

Students may be illiterate or have PhDs, pay may be high or low; facilities may be fantastic or non-existent. It is important that you find out as much as possible about a job before accepting it.

Throughout the Kingdom, education is segregated by sex. By and large, women will teach females; men, males. This is the case for any sort of public teaching unless one teaches children at a foreign school -- American, Korean, German, etc. In private lessons with Saudis or other Arabs, men and women are also segregated unless there are group lessons for families or within a company program for foreigners. For non-Arab foreign adults, one may teach privately to a mixed group in a home situation or in a company facility.

There are a far greater number of men than women seeking English lessons and of course this means the job prospects for male ESL teachers are certainly better than for female teachers.

Saudis and foreigners in Saudi Arabia are learning English for a variety of reasons, most often because it is "required" in schools and on the job, or because it is

perceived as useful to their careers. As discussed previously, some of these students may have a low level of education in Arabic and yet be required to learn English in order to read training manuals. Students in the Saudi National Guard (taught by Vinnell Corporation), and the police (taught by the British Council) are given a pay bonus to attend English classes. For students in schools and at the university, English is mandatory.

Many Saudis over the age of 30 have attended school for only a few years and in the case of women (for whom education was officially opened up in 1962) this is especially so. Younger students are far more likely to be well-educated and literate in Arabic.

The amount of freedom a teacher has to plan his curriculum, select text books, get involved in administrative work, and teach in a particular style varies greatly with the institutional setting. Generally speaking, in secondary schools and Saudi universities there is little room for teaching flexibility and no participation in textbook selection. Students are usually prepared for preset government exams and teachers use the texts to teach towards these exams. Since a high pass rate (90%) is expected in the secondary schools, the standards of what constitutes "pass" are generally low.

In government programs, teaching is also usually toward exams and, by and large, the American Defense Language Institute texts are used. In primary schools the text is set by the Ministry of Education (currently Look, Listen, and Learn series by Longman and a special MacMillan series written for Saudi Arabia in the secondary schools), but the teacher has more freedom to use games, group work, etc. as part of his teaching technique. In private corporations, foreign schools and institutes, there may be a good deal of room for teacher participation in curriculum, text selection and methods, depending upon the institute.

For prospective teachers used to long term planning and decision-making by committee, major adjustments in attitude and behavior will be necessary to function effectively and enjoy a Saudi teaching position. In general, in Saudi Arabia, there is less structure and less long term decision making by administrators than in the U.S. or England. Many decisions which affect classroom teaching are likely to be made on an ad hoc basis at the last minute. Books may be censored after they have already been used at an institute for some time, vacation dates may change or not be known until the last minute and the start of school may be put off several times. Class

size policies might change constantly in response to pressure from students.

Those who have already taught in the Arab world know that both the concept and the use of time are different from in the West. Things are not so rushed and decisions not so final. Often one is told that something will be done bukra ("tomorrow" -- but extending into a nebulous range of several days), inshallah ("God willing" -- or hopefully, if all goes well). When something goes wrong, the response may be maalesh (it really doesn't matter). All of these daily expressions reveal a more flexible and relaxed approach to administration and, indeed, living in general. A wise teacher will soon learn to roll with the punches. In most cases, it really doesn't matter when things get done or if the solution is slightly different from expected.

As of 1985, the basic salary for a teacher with an MA at the university in Riyadh was around \$20,000 plus housing, travel and health benefits. SAIS (the American School in Riyadh) pays about \$17,000. Salaries usually increase with years of experience. Teachers hired from abroad can generally expect somewhere between \$17,000 and \$25,000 as a base. A prospective teacher should not worry about being paid in riyals. There are no exchange

restrictions and riyals are freely convertible into dollars. Many of these schools and institutes are also interested in hiring couples.

On the local market, institutes and private patrons pay on an hourly rate: from 80-120 riyals (\$22-33) is common, although private lessons vary with the reputation and qualifications of the teacher, whether or not he is a native speaker and the wealth of the patron. Some teachers make double the hourly pay cited above. Currently British Council teachers are asking 120 riyals an hour (\$33) for private lessons. Private lessons are usually given either in the teacher's or patron's home, although in the case of a company, they may take place in a recreational facility. Sometimes schools and universities forbid their employees to teach private lessons on the side.

C. Job Interview

General advice to anyone seeking employment is that he find out as much as possible during the job interview regarding issues of resources, facilities and teaching or administrative duties. He may not want the job -- despite high salary and benefits. Aside from the usual questions regarding salary, contact hours, text, resources, etc. some important questions to ask include:

Housing -- Is housing or a reasonable allowance provided? An apartment can cost 35,000 riyals per year. Will maintenance be provided? Is the apartment furnished? Are utilities paid? Is electricity 110 or 220 volts? If housing is furnished, is it in a compound or on the open market? Will there be any restrictions imposed? Life in a "foreign" compound will have fewer restrictions, but also offer fewer opportunities to meet Saudis. Are there any recreation facilities and are they available for use by women?

Transportation -- Is a car provided? If not, what means of transportation to and from work are there? How far is the job from housing and shopping? If female, will a transportation allowance be given to get to and from work or to hire a driver? Women are forbidden to drive vehicles of any kind, including cars, motorcycles and

bicycles.

Travel and Leave -- Will airfare to job and home be provided above salary? What about "rest and recuperation?" How many days leave will be provided? Are there other travel benefits such as per diem? Will these benefits be given to dependents? Will there be any visa problems? How often will teaching breaks occur and can one leave the country legally at those times?

Pay -- Will a Ramadan bonus (sometimes given during the celebration following the month of fasting) or extra salary for years experience or on the job be given? What about overtime pay?

Family Status -- Will wife, husband or children be allowed to live or visit in the Kingdom? Must a husband find a job within a given time period if one is hired as a female employee?

Educational Expenses for Children -- Will these be covered as a company benefit over and above salary? The cost for a child to attend the SAIS school in Riyadh is a one-time registration fee of about \$1500 (5,000 SR) plus \$4000 (14,000 SR) per year. To send a child abroad will cost about \$10,000 (less in Egypt, India or England but more in Switzerland or the U.S.)

Shipping and Storage -- What allowances will be

available? What restrictions will apply?

Health Benefits -- What will they be? How many days sick leave will be permitted?

Mailing Facilities -- If on a contract relating to the US Government, will APO privileges be granted?

Orientation Program -- Will the company or school provide an orientation program either before or after arrival? Does the company give out any orientation brochures? If not, see suggested readings and guides listed at the end of this section.

Arrival -- Will one be met at the airport? It is wise to get a phone number to reach one's employer in Kingdom in either case. Are any shots needed? How should a visa be obtained? What documents are necessary? Good advice is to bring all diplomas, transcripts, documents certifying past working experience, recommendations, several passport sized photos, and a marriage certificate, if applicable. Also, remember not to bring any pornographic, religious materials or weapons. They will only be confiscated at customs (see Green Guide suggested in appendix).

Females -- What will the housing situation be? Will there be restrictions as far as hours, transportation services, etc.? What dress is needed, both for class and

in town? Single women are usually expected to be extremely discrete and modest in their relations with men. They are likely to be given restricted hours in the evening and their professional life is largely with other women. Likewise, single men will be expected to interact with other men almost exclusively and relations with women must be circumspect and discreet. Engaging in immoral sexual behavior can result in becoming expelled from the Kingdom if discovered by religious authorities or the police.

D. The Community in Arabia as a Teaching Resource

One of the most exciting things about teaching EFL in Saudi Arabia, is simply that English is the unofficial second language of the Kingdom. There are myriad opportunities for students to hear, read and speak English. English is, in fact, so prevalent that students can easily perceive an immediate need for English and are usually quite motivated to learn, especially adults. English signs are visible throughout the city and countryside. English is spoken on construction sites, in shops, between mistress and servant and in just about any international work situation where Arabic is not the native tongue of some speakers. English is thought of as the major language of technology and seen as essential for learning technical terminology and reading operating manuals or equipment instructions in industry and business. It is viewed as a basic tool necessary to acquire the skills to survive in today's international society.

English is the only required foreign language in Saudi primary and secondary schools. The Ministry of Education did discuss withdrawing it from the primary school curriculum two years ago, but ended up retaining it, although cutting instruction from eight hours to four

10
hours per week.

There are two daily English newspapers in the Kingdom, The Arab News and The Saudi Gazette as well as an English television channel and English radio programming. Obviously, it is easy to give students assignments to listen to the news, a particular program on television like Sesame Street, or a film, and equally easy to assign sections of the newspaper or easy English books for reading. Any reading material already in the Kingdom has, theoretically, already passed the censors and is acceptable for student assignments.

Furthermore, there are many organizations which offer programs in English, all shops and supermarkets carry items labeled in English, and quite often shop assistants are third world workers who speak better English than Arabic. Many teachers send their female students to shows on fashion, dance or travel at the various International Women's Clubs and almost all teachers give students assignments to read labels, instructions and signs on items in the supermarket. Whether male or female, however, one has to be careful, naturally, to send students to organizations where Saudis are welcome and which have sexually segregated activities. The programs of many foreign companies are for members only and are

often sexually mixed.

If a school situation permits, it is also possible to arrange coffees, baby showers, demonstrations, or parties of any type and invite native English speaking friends to meet students. Some schools, however, may forbid social mixing between students and teachers after class.

At present there is no professional ESL/EFL organization in the Kingdom. Saudis frown on large gatherings of foreigners and do not officially permit sexually mixed meetings. There is currently, however, a TESOL representative in Dammam. Since the person in this position is likely to rotate, one should contact TESOL before coming to Saudi Arabia for updated information on the representative. Also, occasionally either the British Council or USIS arrange EFL teachers' meetings so that persons from different organizations meet, but such meetings are relatively rare.

Books and materials available in Saudi Arabia. EFL texts and aids available at schools and companies can range from excellent in places like ARAMCO, University of Petroleum and Minerals, the British Council and the American "International" Schools, to moderate, poor or non-existent in most other places. When interviewing for a job do not hesitate to find out whether there will be

access to copy machines, library resources, tape recorders, visual aids, etc. Bringing some EFL materials from abroad, if the weight allowance permits, may be a solution.

In the past five years, there has been a gradual growth of EFL materials available on the local market. Currently, in Riyadh, there are five or six very good bookstores which carry EFL series texts, many kinds of dictionaries, and easy English readers, as well as novels for children and adults. The British Council and USIS both maintain good EFL reference libraries and USIS allows checkout of EFL books and video tapes for EFL teachers working at institutes or schools. The same is true in Dammam and Jeddah as well. The smaller towns are not likely to offer much.

Research involving access to EFL journals and articles, is most likely to be disappointing. Currently, there are no libraries which carry EFL journals. Furthermore, many libraries, including the British Council and the universities, allow only limited check-out of their materials and are basically reference facilities. Along these lines, one should not expect to be able to send students to the library to do research, since rules governing access hours and use are likely to be complex

and limiting, particularly for women. This does not mean one should totally despair of doing research in the Kingdom, however. The Arab world, and Saudi Arabia in particular, is ripe for original research and most articles and books sent from abroad will arrive without problems from censors.

III: Conclusion

For me living and teaching in Riyadh has been an enjoyable experience and an exciting opportunity for meeting people of a very different culture while at the same time growing professionally. The key factor in reducing my initial frustration and fear was a willingness to try to understand the culture from its own perspective. In conclusion, I would like to recapitulate the main points which an EFL teacher coming to Saudi Arabia should keep in mind.

First, he should always be aware that Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam and that the particular perspective on Islam here, Wahabism, is a very conservative one. This will affect him in all aspects of life. In the classroom in particular, he will have to deal with sexual segregation and its implications, text and materials censorship, conservative daily dress and behavior, and questioning from students regarding Islamic vocabulary and interests.

Secondly, he should remember the importance of family and tribe in the Arab world. He will have to learn Arab names, and their importance and be able to greet people personally. Also, he should be aware that tribal prejudice and the use of power and privilege may affect

both the way he teaches and whom and what he teaches. His social life is likely to be affected by Arab values governing whom to visit and fear of foreigners.

Third, he will likely learn an entirely new system of values regarding political and educational behavior. School scheduling and staffing may be a function of political and religious decisions made at top levels of government, sometimes at the last minute. Administrative behavior may be quite different from that of the West and reflect a more relaxed approach to life. Low levels of literacy in the Kingdom and no past history of support in the home environment for organized study habits and reading behavior, will mean that his teaching is likely to be altered to emphasize skills he assumes are taught at home in the West. His attempts to try-out new teaching methods learned abroad may or may not be well received depending on the age and past learning habits of his students. Most likely, he will have to deal with squabbles due to international staffing and disagreements regarding teaching approaches.

Fourth, depending upon his cultural background, he is likely to face stereotyping from Saudis regarding the English, Americans and other nationalities. He will sometimes face major conflicts between his own and Saudi

students' values because of background and education.

Fifth, he should remember that Arabic is a language whose grammar, phonetic, phonemic and written systems are not Indo-European and are vastly different from those of English. Arabic is written from right to left and sometimes sloping downwards. There are no capital letters and sometimes independent words in speaking are attached to one another in writing. Although Arabs have few problems with English consonant sounds, they have many with vowel sounds and stress patterns, as well as with English spelling. A teacher should try to familiarize himself with common linguistic problems of students.

Sixth, when searching for a job, he should take care to ask as many questions as possible regarding both academic and non-academic issues, from whether he will have photocopying and library facilities to whether he will have housing, recreation and health benefits. Once the move to the Kingdom has been made, it is too late to ask questions, and services he assumes at home may or may not be available to him in Saudi Arabia. A single female teacher should be especially sure to ask about services, as she will not be allowed to drive and she will be restricted both in her professional and social life.

Finally, he should be aware that Saudi Arabia is a

booming, developing country, where English is the second most commonly spoken language. He will have many kinds of exciting opportunities to teach students from all over the world and most likely there will be an ever-growing number of resources available to him to make teaching easier. Presently there are English newspapers, TV, bookstores, EFL texts and aids available. Both the British Council and USIS have services for him if his company does not. It is more than likely he will have an enjoyable and unusual experience teaching in the Kingdom.

Notes

¹ "English Language Teaching Profile: Saudi Arabia" British Council. June 1980, p. 6. This document cites 2107 EFL teachers at schools and universities in 1980. My own estimates are that by 1985, and including private companies, there were more.

² John Marks and Sarah Graham-Brown, "Mosaic: The Business of Learning English" The Middle East. Dec. 1984, p.57

³ Saudi Gazette. April 29, 1985, p.9

⁴ Arab News. Sept. 23, 1983, p.9; Saudi Gazette. Dec. 14, 1985, p.3.

⁵ Clifton Campbell, "International Communication (with special Attention to the English Language Capabilities of Saudi Arab Students)" Paper available through EDRS (ED226373 CS207383) 1983, p.7

⁶

John W. Bagnole. TEFL, Perceptions in the Arab World. American Friends of the Middle East. 1980

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See the list of suggested TEFL readings in the appendix to this document. In addition to reading these, it is a good idea for a teacher to start learning basic Arabic reading and writing and see for himself some of the simplest differences between the languages. Probably the best book for this purpose is Peter F. Abboud, et.al. Elementary Modern Standard Arabic. University of Michigan, 1975

⁸

Donald Light and Suzanne Keller, Sociology. Arnold A. Knopf, 1975. p.474

⁹

Richard R. Clayton, Family, Marriage and Social Change. D.C. Heath and Co., 1975. p.496

¹⁰

John Marks and Sarah Graham-Brown. "Mosaic: The Business of Learning English" The Middle East. Nov. 1984, p.68

Appendix

Orientation Guides and Articles

Listed below are a basic set of articles and guide books which give insights on teaching EFL in the Arab world and practical information on living in Saudi Arabia. For more on TEFL, obtain an ERIC listing from any library with ERIC computer services using the descriptors "English teaching," "Arabic," and "Middle East." Or, write the Centre for Information on Language teaching in London (address listed on page 45) and ask for a "briefing pack" and a list of articles on TEFL to Arabs. The MEED guide below has an extensive bibliography on such topics as law, business, flora and fauna, maps, city guides and travel and is a good source for further general readings on Saudi Arabia.

TEFL Articles and Books

English Language Teaching Profile: Saudi Arabia. The British Council, Language Teaching Centre, 20 Carlton Terrace, London SW1Y 5AP, 1980 (12 pages)

TEFL, Perceptions and the Arab World. Bagnole, John W. The American Friends of the Middle East, 1717 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20036 1980 (50 pages)

"Language and Culture Guide 1: Arabic" Centre for Language Teaching and Research, the British Council, London, 1975

"Mosaic: The Business of Learning English," The Middle East, 1984: October, November and December issues.

"The Least You Should Know about Arabic: Implications for the ESL Writing Instructor." Thompson-Panos, Karyn and Thomas-Ruzic, Maria. TESOL Quarterly, vol. 17, no. 4, p.609-622, Dec. 1983

International Communication (with Special Attention to the English Language Capabilities of Saudi Arabian Students), Clifton P. Campbell, U.S. Dept. of Education Document (ERIC) ED 226373, 1983

"Contrastive Studies/Error Analysis - Arabic/English" Specialized Bibliography C7, CILT, British Council, March 1980

"The Past in English and Moroccan Arabic," Meziani, Ahmed. International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching, v. 18, n.3, p.248-52, 1980

"A Practical Approach for Teaching ESL Pronunciation Based on Distinctive Feature Analysis," Leahy, Robert. TESOL Quarterly, v.14, n.12, p.209-19, June 1980

"A Defense of Phonetics and RP." Al-Sawaf, H.B.M. English Language Teaching Journal, v.33, n.4, p.287-89, July 1979

"Problems of Definiteness in the Written English of Arabic Speakers," Wilcott, Paul. English Language Teaching Journal, v.33, n.1, p.67-73, Oct. 1978

"Patterns in Spelling Errors." Ibrahim, Mohammed. English Language Teaching Journal, v.32, n.3, p.207-212, April 1978

"Diglossia and Foreign Language Teaching," Ibrahim, Mohammed H. International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching, v.15, n.2, p.158-163. May 1977

"Some Problems of English Vowels for Iraqi Learners."
Aziz, Yowell Y. English Language Teaching Journal.
v.30, n.3, p.254-257 April 1976

"Learning to Read English as a Second Language:
Effects of First Language Script System and Cultural/
Educational Background." Brown, Tracy and Haynes,
Margot, 1983. Research Report ED249759 FL013812
available from ERIC

"A Classification of the Lexical Problems of EFL/ESL
Students." Elkhatik, Ahmed Shafik Adelwahab.
Research Report ED246691 FL014507 available from ERIC

Guides to Living in Saudi Arabia

The Green Book: Guide for Living in Saudi Arabia.
Pendleton, Madge, David L. Davies and Frances Owen
Snodgrass, Middle East Assoc. 1717 Massachusetts
Ave. NW, Suite 100, Washington, D.C. 20036
1980 (130 pages)

Saudi Arabia: a MEED Practical Guide. Middle East
Economic Digest (MEED), 21 John St.
London, WC1N 2BP, 1981 (280 pages)

Background Notes - Saudi Arabia. US Department of
State publication 7835. Office of Public
Communication, Bureau of Public Affairs,
Washington, D.C. 1979

A Short Guide for British Personnel Living and
Working in the Middle East. COMET (Committee for
Middle East Trade), 33 Bury St., St. James
London SW1Y 6AX

Welcome to Riyadh. A private publication of the
Riyadh Women's Group (updated yearly)

General Readings

Area Handbook for Saudi Arabia. Nyrop, Richard F.
Foreign Area Studies, American University,
Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 1977

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Stacey International
Publishers, London 1977

The Kingdom. Lacey, Robert. Hutchinson and Co. Ltd.
London, 1981

Eternal Saudi Arabia. Golt, Richard. Elk
Publications, London, 1980

Mecca, The Muslim Pilgrimage. Guellous, Ezzedine.
Paddington Press, London, 1979

Atlas of the Islamic World since 1500. Robinson,
Francis. Phaidon Press Ltd., Oxford, 1982

Women in the Muslim World. Beck, Lois and Keddie,
Nikki, eds. Harvard University Press. Cambridge,
Massachusetts, 1978

Women and the Family in the Middle East. Fernea,
Elizabeth W., ed. University of Texas Press 1985